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SOME CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO HUMAN IMMORTALITY.

I do not propose in this paper to offer any arguments in favor of the positive assertion that men are immortal. I believe that such arguments exist, and that, in spite of the difficulty and obscurity of the subject, they are of sufficient strength to justify a belief in our immortality.* But to expound these arguments would require an elaborate and bulky treatise of technical metaphysics, for they could only be based on a demonstration of some idealist theory of the fundamental nature of reality. My present design is merely to consider some arguments against immortality, which have been based on certain facts of ordinary observation, and certain results of physical science. I shall endeavor to show that these are invalid, and that the presumption against immortality, which they have produced in many people, should be discarded.

It is better to speak of the immortality of the self, or of man, than of the immortality of the soul. The latter phrase suggests untenable views. For, in speaking of the identity of a man during different periods of his bodily life, we do not usually say that he is the same soul, but the same self, or the same man. And to use a different word when we are discussing the prolongation of that identity after death, calls up the idea of an identity less perfect than that which lasts through a bodily life. The form in which the question is put thus implies that the answer is to be in some degree negative—that a man is not *as much* himself after death, as he is before it, even if something escapes from complete destruction.

Moreover, it is unfortunately customary to say that a man *has* a soul, not that he *is* one. Now if our question is put in the form, “has man an immortal soul?” an affirmative answer would be absurd. So far as it would mean anything, it would mean that the man himself was the body, or something which died with the body,—at any rate was not immortal,—and that

**Cf.* My “Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,” chap. ii.

something, not himself, which he owned during life, was set free at his death to continue existing on its own account. For these reasons it seems better not to use the word soul, and to put our question in the form "are men immortal?"

What reasons have we for supposing that our existence is only temporary? I see around me bodies which behave so like my own that I conclude that they are related to other conscious selves in the same way that my body is related to myself. But from time to time I see one of these bodies cease to behave in this way, and become motionless, unless moved from outside. Shortly afterwards this body dissolves into its constituent parts. Its form and identity as a body are completely destroyed. My own experience, and that of others, in the past, leads me to the conclusion that the same thing will happen in the future to every body now existing, including my own.

How does this affect the question of my existence? It is clear that if I am a mere effect of my body—a form of its activity—I shall cease when the body ceases. And it is also clear that, if I could not exist without this particular body, then the destruction of the body will be a sign that I have ceased to exist.

But, besides death, there is another characteristic of nature which tends to make us doubt our immortality. Of all the things around us, from a pebble to a solar system, science tells us that they are transitory. Each of them arose out of something else, each of them will pass away into something else. What is a man that he should be exempt from this universal law?

Thus we have three questions to consider. (1) Is my self an activity of my body? (2) Is my present body an essential condition of the existence of my self? (3) Is there any reason to suppose that my self does not share the transitory character which I recognize in all the material objects around me?

With regard to the first of these questions, it is certain, to begin with, that my body influences my self much and constantly. A large part of my mental life is made up of sensations. Sensations are continually being produced in me as a result of changes in the sense-organs of my body, and, as far as we know, they are never produced in me in any other way.

And the course of my thoughts and emotions can be profoundly affected by the state of my body. If my body gets no food for twenty-four hours, they will be affected one way. If I introduce whiskey or opium into it, they will be affected another way. If my body is very fatigued, the ordinary current of my mental life will be entirely suspended in profound sleep, or completely broken by dreams. If any of these processes is carried far enough, my body dies, and I cease to have any relation to it for the future, which is certainly an important event for me, whether I survive it or not.

The world has long been certain that the body acts on the mind. The knowledge must be, at least, as old as drunkenness. But it is equally certain that the mind acts on the body. My limbs, on many occasions, move according to my will. And the normal course of the body can be altered by the mind, as much as the normal course of the mind can be altered by the body. Grief, or fear, or anger can produce bodily illness, and even death.

Now each of these groups of phenomena—the effects of body on mind and of mind on body—could be explained on the hypothesis that the self and the body were two separate realities, neither of which was the mere product of the other, though each affected the other and caused changes in it. And it might be thought that this would be the most natural conclusion to come to, since the action appears to be reciprocal—mind acting on body as much as body acts on mind.

There is always, however, a very strong tendency to adopt the view that the self is a mere activity of the body—or at any rate to hold that the only escape from this view lies in believing some form of Revealed Religion which denies it. The cause of this tendency is, in the first place, the incomplete nature of the explanation which would be furnished by the recognition of the self and its body as independent realities.* All ultimate explanation endeavors to reduce the universe to a unity. The self is spirit, the body is matter. Spirit and matter, taken as

*By "independent" I do not mean here isolated, or unconnected realities, but such as stand on an equal footing, so that, though each is connected with the other, neither is subordinated to the other.

two independent realities, are quite heterogeneous in their nature, and to take them thus divides the universe into two parts which have no real unity with one another, and whose connection can only be taken as an unsolved problem, or a miracle. Such a connection as this is not the reasoned and systematic unity which satisfies our desire for explanation, and we therefore endeavor to find a point of view from which we may regard spirit and matter as essentially the same.

This is a metaphysical inquiry, and demands that we should go beneath the surface. In particular it demands that we should not only consider the content of our knowledge, but should also ask what knowledge is, and what is involved in our having it at all. If we neglect this, and only consider the knowledge presented to us in science and common-sense, without going deeper, we are very naturally led to the conclusion that matter is the only reality, and that what we have called spirit is nothing more than one of the activities which characterize matter when it is in the special form of a human body. (It is immaterial for our present purpose whether the adherents of this view suppose matter to exist as a substance, to which these activities belong, or whether they say that the activities *are* the matter. The essential point is that the spiritual is in either case reduced to a temporary form of an activity whose fundamental nature is non-spiritual. Indeed the two alternatives really mean the same, although the second is sometimes put forward as a great improvement on the first.)

There are several reasons why a mind that does not reflect deeply should give this preference to matter. One of the facts which is impressed most deeply on every man is that the nature of matter does not depend on his will. I cannot, by my mere choice, make the stone which I see and touch into bread. Nay, however passionately I may desire that it should be bread, however serious the consequences to myself and others of its remaining a stone, a stone it remains. The nature of matter does not depend on my will. And from this it is an easy step to the assertion that the existence of matter is independent of myself. But the two propositions are not really identical, and, as we shall see further on, the second is not true.

Moreover, if we regarded matter and spirit as two separate realities, matter would appear far the stronger. Spirit we only know in the form of separate individuals, set in the world of matter. No one human spirit has ever, as far as we know, been open to observation for much more than a hundred years, and the lower animals only slightly exceed this limit. Matter forms one vast system. History assures us it has existed for thousands of years. Science extends the period to millions. Man can move matter, but we know that he cannot destroy it. On the other hand, a very slight change in matter will, at any rate, banish any spirit from the sphere in which we can observe it. The gradual cooling of the earth, an absurdly trivial episode in astronomy, will put an end to the only conditions under which, as far as our observation goes, it is possible for spirits to exist. Since spirit, then, appears so much weaker than matter when they are taken separately, is it strange that, when an attempt is made to reduce one to the other, it is spirit that is called on to give way?

If spirit is to be conceived as a product of matter, that is equivalent to saying that what we have supposed to be a separate reality called spirit is nothing more than one particular form of the activity of matter,—in other words, a way in which matter behaves under certain circumstances. This view is rendered more plausible by the fact that the activity of matter does take many different forms. The same energy, science informs us, which sometimes shows itself as heat, at other times shows itself as motion, or, again, as electricity. And this same energy, it is asserted, transforms itself under other circumstances,—when it is found in a human body—into thought, will, and emotion. Certainly, it is admitted, thought, will and emotion are not very like heat, motion and electricity. But then, heat, motion and electricity are not very like one another. And, if they can all be reduced to this common unity, why should not the forms of consciousness share the same fate?

All these considerations rest, it will be seen, on the proposition that matter can exist independently of spirit. For if this were not so, it would obviously be absurd to explain away the separate reality of spirit by making it one of the temporary

forms which the activity of matter takes. Now rather deeper inquiry will, I think, show us that matter is not independent of spirit, that, on the contrary, matter is a product of which the mind which observes it is one of the causes, and which, therefore, has no meaning except in relation to spirit. If this is the case it will be impossible to consider the self as an activity of its body.

If we inquire into our conception of matter, we shall find that one element in it is made up of some of our sensations. The sensations of hearing, taste, and smell do not form part of our conception of matter. Sounds, tastes, and odors we hold to be caused in us by matter, but not to exist in the matter itself. And the same position is assigned to sensations of color. But the shapes and movements which we perceive by sight and touch, and the resistances which we perceive by touch,* are attributed to the matter itself. We say that all matter is solid, and offers resistance to any other matter which attempts to penetrate it. And we say that matter is grouped into material objects which have definite sizes and shapes, and which move at different rates in different directions.

Our conception of matter, then, contains sensations of sight and touch. But what are sensations? Can they be qualities of matter? Certainly not. A sensation is an act of consciousness. To talk of an unconscious being as seeing or feeling anything is absurd. Sensations, therefore, cannot be constituents of matter, if matter is something which can exist independently of consciousness.

“But,” it may be answered, “no one asserted that the sensations were constituents of matter. The truth is that matter has these qualities, which are known to us in our sensations, but which exist in the matter as qualities which are not sensations.” This can be said, but does it mean anything? Do extension,

*This statement is not strictly accurate as it stands. The *mere* sensations of sight and touch, taken by themselves, would not make us aware of shapes, movements and resistances. But it would take us too far out of our way to consider how far such perceptions involve ideas as well as sensations. And it is sufficient for our present purpose that the sensations also are involved—that without the sense of sight and touch we could never know extension, motion, or solidity.

motion, solidity, mean anything if we consider them without reference to the sensations of some conscious being? Have we any conception of solidity which does not involve our sensation of resistance? Or can we imagine what a triangular body, or a spiral movement would be like, if we eliminated all consideration of how they would look or feel to a conscious being who could touch them? These questions must be answered in the negative. We have nothing to go on but the sensation, and in it the two sides—what is felt and the fact that it is felt—are indissolubly united. It is only a confusion of thought which makes us imagine that they can be separated, and suppose that a thing can have the qualities independent of our perception of them.

If this is the case spirit cannot be a mere activity of matter. For, if it were a mere activity of matter, it could be explained in terms of matter. Matter would explain both itself and spirit. But so far is this from being the case that we can only explain matter in terms of spirit. Matter apart from spirit is meaningless.

This result is sometimes obscured to us by the apparently passive character of sensations. Our will can make no direct alteration in them. We can only receive them as they come. And this suggests that we are merely passive in sensation, and that our minds, like a mirror, only reflect a reality outside them. It requires a more careful analysis to enable us to perceive that the qualities asserted to be reflected are such as are meaningless apart from the mirror, and cannot, therefore, exist in outside realities.

It is sometimes said, that matter exists, apart from our perception of it, as the potentiality of such perception. But to exist in potentiality means not to exist in reality. When we say that anything now exists potentially, we mean that it does *not* exist now, but that it will or might exist in the future, under certain circumstances. And to say that matter can exist apart from consciousness, as the potentiality of conscious perceptions, is just to say that it does not exist apart from consciousness, and that, if it does exist, it will be in relation to consciousness. If, therefore, we say that matter apart from spirit

is a potentiality it is impossible that spirit should be a transitory result of matter. For spirit can only be a result of something real, and if matter apart from spirit is only a potentiality, then it is not real.

Sensations alone, however, do not make up our conception of matter. There is another element which may be detected by analysis in it, and this element also, we shall see, is meaningless except in relation to spirit. This element is ideas or relations.

This element is as essential as the other. Indeed neither can exist without the other. For we could not be conscious of our sensations at all, if they were not joined into some sort of system by ideas. A consciousness composed of unrelated sensations would not only be chaotic, but non-existent. But we need not trouble about this now. For, even if we could be conscious of sensations without ideas, it is quite certain that sensations without ideas could never give us the conception of matter which we have in science, and which, if spirit were the result of matter, would be the fundamental conception of the whole of reality.

The ideas which are contained in the conception of matter are numerous. It will be sufficient to take two, Substantiality and Causality.

When I observe an orange, I am conscious, perhaps, of its shape by sight, of its hardness by touch, and of its odor by smell. I say all these qualities belong to the *same* orange. That is to say, I say that it has the shape and solidity, and that it causes the smell in me. Or, again, I have these sensations now, I walk away and do not have them, I return and have them again, and I say that I see the *same* orange now that I saw five minutes ago.

How does this sameness come in? Is it a sensation? Certainly not. For it tells us of a certain identity between three sensations of different senses,—namely, that they are all referred to the same matter. And no sensation could tell us this, since it has no reference to any sense but its own. How could we see, touch or smell the identity of the matter to which the shape, the solidity and the odor are to be referred? Or

could we hear it or taste it? And the sameness in the second case is, with equal certainty, not a sensation. For in this case we say that past sensations, which no longer exist, are to be referred to the same object as our present sensations. Now sensations only tell us of the present. They cannot tell us of a relation between the present and the past. How could we see or touch a relation between present sights and feelings and other sights and feelings which have ceased to exist?

Substantiality, then, is not due to sensation. It is an idea, springing not from the senses but from the reason. It is due, therefore, to the activity of the mind. And, at the same time, it forms an essential part of the conception of matter. For that conception gives matter qualities which are perceived by two separate senses, and gives it also the power to awake in us the sensations of the other senses. It therefore involves the reference of different sensations to the same matter. And, again, the conception of a world of matter involves some identity of the matter through time. We have to be able to say, for example, that matter can remain the same though its form be changed. And this, too, involves Substantiality, since we have to refer successive sensations to the same matter.

Let us now consider Causality. This cannot, any more than substantiality, be a sensation. Our senses, no doubt, can give us two sensations in succession, though it does not follow that the senses alone would render us conscious that they were in succession. But causality involves not only that B follows A, but that B is there *because* A was there before it, and that B would not have been there without A. Now this is not a matter for the senses. Can we *see* that the smoke which is before us would not be there if there had been no fire? We see what is, but we cannot see what is not, or what might have been. If we saw causality, then causality like all other objects of sight, must be an extended and colored surface, which it is not. Nor would it be more possible to hear, or touch, or smell, or taste it.

Causality, then, like substantiality, is not a sensation but an idea. Whenever we say that A is the cause of B, the mind makes a judgment, and it is only through such judgment that

we get the idea of causality at all. If the mind confined itself to receiving what the sensations bring it, causality would be unknown to it. And the conception of matter would be meaningless if causality were withdrawn. If the movement of one piece of matter did not cause the movement of another, if matter did not cause sensations in us, the whole of science would be upset. And with it would go all our reasons for believing in matter, since the justification of our belief in matter is the success of science in explaining the world by means of it. In particular, the attempt to explain spirit as a form of the activity of matter clearly implies causality. For it explains the transformation of activity into the form of consciousness as due to the particular conditions which it meets with in the human body, and thus makes those circumstances the cause of the transformation.

It is sufficient for our object to have pointed out that these two ideas are involved in the conception of matter. They do not stand alone. Kant and Hegel have shown how many ideas are involved in even the simplest experience, and how meaningless sensation becomes, if we endeavor to take it in abstraction from all ideas. Without going further, we have done enough to prove that matter cannot exist independently of spirit. For of the two elements into which our conception of matter can be analyzed, one—our sensations—has no meaning for us apart from a perceiving mind, and the other—our ideas—is produced by an act of the mind.

And we have thus, I think, proved our original contention that the self cannot be one of the activities of its own body. If the self was, as this theory would require it to be, merely a way in which matter behaved under certain circumstances, it would be possible to explain the self satisfactorily in terms of matter. And it would be possible to imagine a state of things in which those circumstances, which determine the activity of matter to take the form of spirit, occurred nowhere in the universe, which would then be a universe of matter without any consciousness. But so far is this from being the case that we can, as we now see, only explain matter in terms of a conscious self, and to talk of matter existing without consciousness

is simply unmeaning. So far is matter from being the sole reality, of which the self is only a form, that, taken by itself, it is not a reality at all. It is something which is known by the self, and which is meaningless apart from the self's knowledge of it.

This may be put in another way. If my self is one of the activities of my body, then, as my body only exists in the knowledge of some conscious being, my self must be a product of some piece of knowledge. It is clearly absurd to suppose that I am the product of my body, as my body is known to myself, for then I should be the product of an event in my own history. But it is equally impossible that any self should be one of the activities of its own body as perceived by another self. For in that case the self A would be the product of an event in the history of another self B. But how about B? By the same rule it also will have to be the product of an event in the history of another self. If this self is A, the absurdity recurs in an aggravated form. For then A would be the product of an event which happened in a self which was itself the product of A. But if we make B the product of an event in the history of a third self C, the same question will arise about C, and so on without end. If a self could only be explained as the activity of its body, and the body only as what is known by a self, there could be no reality anywhere—not in selves, which are only transitory actions of their bodies, nor in bodies which are only a part of the content of a self. And so we are brought back to the conclusion that the self cannot be an activity of its body.

I may be thought to have dwelt unnecessarily on this last point. Surely, it may be said, the theory that the self is an activity of the body stands and falls with the theory of the independent existence of matter. Surely no one would maintain for a moment that the body only existed for spirit, and at the same time that spirit was an activity of the body. Yet both of these propositions have been maintained at once by writers whose metaphysics consisted in a misapplication of the results of science. Men of great ability have maintained that what we call matter is nothing but our thoughts and sensations, and.

at the same time, that our thoughts and sensations are nothing but an activity of our brains. Since my brains are part of the world of matter, this amounts to an assertion that some of my sensations are the causes of themselves and of all the other sensations. And, since the cause is prior to the effect, the brain must exist before it can cause sensations. From which again it would follow that some of my sensations (namely the brain) existed before any of them did. But it is unnecessary to pursue this contradiction further.

Before passing on, it is to be noticed that, when I say that the world of matter I know is nothing but a piece of my knowledge, of which my mind is one of the causes, I do not say that it is merely capricious and only personal. On the contrary it is regular, self-consistent, and independent of my choice, so that it is to be considered as real in my knowledge, though not as real apart from my knowledge of it.

Nor do I wish to suggest that analysis of my conception of matter would bring me to the belief that I was the only reality in the universe. On the contrary, while matter is meaningless if it is attempted to give it an existence independent of myself, it would, on the other hand, be impossible to account for its nature if I were the only reality in the universe. I have every reason to believe that there is other reality besides myself. Only, what ever this reality is, it is *not* the matter which I observe in every-day life, and which science deals with.

Now the existence of reality outside me does not affect our conclusions. The fact that I am not alone in the universe does not give the slightest presumption against our immortality. The supposed independent existence of matter side by side with me *did* give a certain presumption against my immortality. For, taking matter as independent of me, there was some *prima facie* reason to suspect that I was only an activity of my body, and in that case I should certainly cease when it died. But my body is only matter. And neither my body nor its death can exist except as events in some mind. And this, as we have seen, makes it impossible that I should be an activity of my body, and removes one reason for supposing that I should be destroyed by its death.

We must now pass on to our second question. My self cannot be a form of the activity of my body. But it is still possible that the nature of my self makes the possession of my present body essential to it. Granted that the body could not exist except for knowledge, it may be that the knowledge of my body, by my self or other selves, is a necessary condition of the existence of myself. In that case it would be an inevitable inference that when my body dissolves, and ceases to be known as a body at all, my self must have ceased also. If A, whenever it exists, is inevitably accomplished by B, then the cessation of B is a sure sign that A must have ceased also.

What evidence is there in favor of this view? In the first place, while we have plenty of experience of selves who possess bodies, we have no trustworthy experience of selves who exist without bodies, or after their bodies have ceased to exist. (The significance of ghost-stories in this respect will be considered later.) Besides this, the existence of a self seems to involve the experience of sensations. Without them, the self-would have no material for thought, will or feeling, and it is only in thought, will and feeling that the self exists. Now there seems good reason to suppose that sensations never occur in the mind without some corresponding modification of the body. This is certainly the case with normal sensations. And even if the evidence for clairvoyance and thought-transference were beyond dispute, it could never prove the possibility of sensation without bodily accompaniments. For it could not exclude—indeed, it seems rather to suggest—the existence of bodily accompaniments of an obscure and unusual sort.

But, after all, these considerations would, at the most, go to show that *some* body was necessary to my self, and not that its present body was necessary. Have we *now* any reason to suppose that the death of the body would indicate anything more than that the self had transferred its manifestations to a new body, and had, therefore, passed from the knowledge of the survivors, who had only known it through the old body? The apparent improbability of this lies, I think, simply in our instinctive recurrence to the theory that the self is an activity of the body. In that case, no doubt, it would be impossible that

it should successively be connected with two bodies. But that theory we have seen to be untenable. The most that a body can be is an essential accompaniment of the self. And then the supposition that the self has found another body would fit the facts quite as well, as the supposition that the self has ceased to exist.

There seems no reason why such a change should not be instantaneous. But even if it were not so, no additional difficulty would be created. No doubt, if a body is essential to the action of a self, the self would be in a state of suspended animation in the interval between its possession of its two bodies—a state which we might almost call one of temporary non-existence. But this is nothing more than what happens, as far as we can observe, in every case of dreamless sleep. During such a sleep the self, so far as we know, is unconscious,—as unconscious as it could be without a body. And yet this does not prevent its being the same man who went to sleep and woke up again. Why should the difficulty be greater in a change of bodies?

And, after all, have we any reason to suppose that a body is essential to a self? If we consider more closely, we shall, I think, see that the facts before us only support a very different proposition—namely, that, *while a self has a body*, that body is essentially connected with the self's mental life.

For example, no self can be conceived as conscious unless we conceive it as with sufficient *data* for its mental activity. The work of the mind is to combine and connect, and for these activities some material is required. This material is only given, as far as our observation can go, in the form of sensations, and sensations again, as far as our observation goes, seem invariably connected with changes in a body. But it does not follow, because a self which has a body cannot get its *data* except in connection with that body, that it would be impossible for a self without a body to get *data* in some other way. It may be just the existence of the body which makes these other ways impossible at present. If a man is shut up in a house, the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky. But it would not be prudent to infer

that, if he walked out of the house, he could not see the sky because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it.

With regard to the connection of the brain with thought, the chief evidence for it appears to be that diseases or mutilations of the brain affect the course of thought. But this does not prove that, even while a man has a brain, his thoughts are directly connected with it. Many things are capable of disturbing thought, which are not essential to its existence. For example, a sufficiently severe attack of tooth-ache or gout may render all consecutive abstract thought impossible. But if the tooth was extracted, or the toe amputated, we should still be able to think. And, in the same way, the fact that an abnormal state of the brain may affect our thoughts, does not prove that the normal states of the brain are necessary for thought.

And, even if the brain is essential to thought while we have bodies, it would not follow that, when we ceased to have brains we could not think without them. The same argument applies here as with the organs of sense. It would be quite possible that a self which ceased to have a body would be able to think without one, and that its present inability to think except in connection with the body was a limitation which the presence of the body itself imposed.

We have now considered the two arguments against the immortality of the self which spring from the death of the body. But we have said nothing on the evidence, or asserted evidence, which is offered by stories of the ghosts of the dead. Such stories, however numerous and well-authenticated, could never give us any positive evidence that the self was eternal. At the most they could prove that it survived its body for a few centuries. But indirectly the evidence might be of considerable weight. For they might possibly prove that the self survived the death of its body. Now the death of its body is by far the strongest reason that we have for doubting the self's immortality. And if the appearances of ghosts could prove that this reason had no weight, they would undoubtedly have greatly strengthened, though only indirectly, the theory that the self is immortal.

Much of the evidence offered on this subject is doubtless utterly untrustworthy. But there is a good deal which investigation has failed to break down. And there is much to be said in support of the view that after all deductions have been made for fraud, error, and coincidence, there is still a sufficient residuum to justify a belief in apparitions of the dead.

But, even if this were admitted, I do not think that we should be much nearer to a belief in immortality. The most that the evidence could ever make us do, it appears to me, would be to admit that there was some causal connection between the dead person and the apparition which was experienced after his death. But this would not prove that he existed after his death. A chain of effects may exist long after its original cause is destroyed. Chatham may be one of the chief causes of the pride which England excites in an Englishman to-day, but this proves nothing as to Chatham's present existence. And, as far as I know, all stories of apparitions would be equally explained by the theory that a man might before his death initiate a chain of circumstances which would cause his apparition to appear, after his death, under certain conditions, to men still alive.

This theory may appear strained. But when we consider the enormous weight of negative evidence which would have to be met by any attempt to prove, on experimental grounds, that the self could survive its body, we may doubt if it is as improbable as the alternative theory that the apparitions prove the existence of man after death. The fact is that, if we once admit the independent existence of matter, the presumption that the self is a form of the activity of its body is almost overwhelming, and almost any hypothesis which is compatible with this becomes more probable than any hypothesis which contradicts it. On the other hand, if we deny the independent existence of matter, the proof of immortality from apparitions is less antecedently improbable. But it is still not very strong. And it is now unimportant. For, as we saw above, the presumption that the death of the body destroys the self vanishes with the idea of the independent existence of matter. And it is only this presumption which apparitions could, in any case, remove.

We come now to the third question. Is there any reason to suppose that my self does not share the transitory character which I recognize in all the material objects around me?

What exactly is this transitory character? When science says that a material object—a planet, or a human body—ceases to exist, what does it mean? Does it mean that anything is annihilated? No, that is exactly what it does not mean. It means that units, which were combined in a certain way, are now combined otherwise. The form has changed. But everything which was there before is there now.

The material universe can be reduced, according to science, to atoms and energy—according to some views to energy alone. Everything else is only some combination or form of these primal realities. Now science does not tell us of the destruction of atoms. They are asserted on the contrary, to be permanent, and all change is accounted for by changes in their combinations. And the foundation of all arguments about energy is that the amount of energy remains the same, however varying may be its forms.

We need not inquire whether this distinction between an unchanging matter and a changing form can have more than practical and approximate correctness. It is sufficient to notice that the analogy of science—whatever weight may be attached to it,—only gives us reason to suppose combinations transitory. Units, on the contrary, which are not themselves combinations, science treats as permanent.

Is the self a combination? It certainly resembles a combination in one respect, for it is differentiated, and contains a plurality. At the same moment, to take simple instances, we can see a table and a chair; we can desire simultaneously food and revenge; and we can experience simultaneously anger and vanity. But it does not follow from this that a self is a combination. For if a whole is a combination it means that it is built up of parts which could exist without being combined in that way, while the combination could not exist without them. If the bricks of a wall, for instance, were destroyed, the wall would be destroyed too. But the wall might be destroyed by being taken to pieces, and the bricks would remain unchanged.

In this way science reduces all objects to atoms or energy in various forms. The objects depend on the atoms or energy, but this is not reciprocal. For the atoms and energy are regarded as still existing when the objects are broken up.

Do the parts of the self stand in this relation to it? Can I conceive my thoughts, my volitions, my emotions, existing isolated, or in new combinations when my self had ceased to exist? The words are unmeaning. We cannot conceive a thought, a volition, or an emotion existing outside of self. Nor is there any meaning in saying that the same thought which was once part of my mind could afterwards be part of somebody else's. The self, we must say, is complex, but not a compound. It has parts, but it is not built up out of them. For, while it depends on them, they just as much depend on it. It could not exist apart from them, but, on the other hand, it is quite as impossible for them to exist apart from it.

The self, therefore, cannot cease by the separation of its parts. For its parts only exist as united in it, and therefore could not separate from it. If it did cease to exist, it could only be by annihilation. It is not only that the form would have changed, but the form and content alike would have perished.

Now there is no analogy in science to suggest the probability of this. For science, as we have seen, while treating all combinations as changeable, assumes as fundamental the persistence of the units of those combinations. This, indeed, does not give us any safe analogy for the persistence of the self. In the first place there is reason to doubt the absolute validity of the distinction between matter and form, which science finds it convenient to make. And, in the second place, the difference between an atom and a self is too great for an analogy from one to the other ever to be very conclusive. But at any rate science gives no analogy against us. For it treats nothing but combinations as perishable, and a self is not a combination.

All this, as I said at the beginning of this paper, still leaves us very far from a positive assertion of immortality. Granting that the death of the body is no argument for the destruction of the self, and granting that the self cannot be decom-

posed into its constituents, it is still quite possible that the self should not be immortal. And this view has been held in many systems of idealism. It may, for example, be held that finite individuals only exist to carry out some divine purpose, and that when no longer required for this, their existence may cease. This was Lotze's view. Or again, it may be maintained that there is something contradictory in the idea of a self, which prevents us from regarding it as an adequate expression of reality, and that therefore there is no reason to suppose that any particular self shares the eternity which is characteristic of true reality.

To meet such doubts as these it would be necessary to construct a complete metaphysical system. We should have to determine what was the general nature of all reality, and whether that nature involved the existence of finite selves. And if in this way we reached the conclusion that the existence of finite selves was eternally necessary, the question would arise whether each self was eternal, or whether, on the other hand, there was an unending succession of transitory selves. All that I have endeavored to do here has been to show that the more obvious arguments against immortality—those which have most weight with most people—have no validity.

In spite of all arguments however, the idea that the self cannot be immortal continually returns to us. Reflection may drive it away, but in unreflective moments it establishes itself again. For the purposes of ordinary life we are compelled to take matter as an independent reality. Whenever we forget that this is only a practically convenient inaccuracy, and take it as an absolute truth, the suggestion that the self is only an activity of matter appears almost irresistible. And we are so accustomed, when dealing with matter, to treat every complex as a dissoluble compound, that we are continually falling back on the supposition that the self also must be a compound, since it is complex.

The opinion that a belief in immortality is logically indefensible gains strength, paradoxical as it may seem, from the very fact that most of the western world desire that the belief may be true. It is certain that many people do believe it only

because they wish it to be true, their desires misleading their judgment. And there is a tendency, illogical but not unnatural, to conclude from this that there can be no reasons which would resist a more impartial scrutiny. And, on a similar principle, the almost unanimous acquiescence of Revealed Religions in the belief has discredited it in the eyes of many of those who hold none of those religions. The only way to escape from these negative presumptions seems to lie in metaphysical considerations. Nor is it, perhaps, very surprising that no other method should be adequate for the determination of a question so strictly metaphysical.

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MARRIAGE AS AN ECONOMIC INSTITUTION.

Commercial views of marriage are justly deprecated nowadays in opinion, if not in practice, by the majority of thoughtful men. Yet there is a sense in which these views would give rise to greater mental refinement and higher moral standards than we derive from the idea that marriages are made in heaven. That this idea is a false one, the Bible, by which many of us wish to be guided, explicitly teaches us. The founder of the most spiritual religion which has ever educated the world, expressly states that marriage is earthly, both in its origin and its work. There ought not to be anything in this teaching which shocks or disgusts or disappoints us. We shall only, indeed, have to examine it closely, and we shall find that our high-soaring visions of marriage imply not a little mistaken sentiment, while the doctrine of our great wholesome-minded Teacher is both sound and sublime. The greatest merit of this, as of all his doctrines, is, that it is adapted to the needs of men, as on the one hand material, and on the other spiritual, beings. It allows for the fact that so long as spiritual beings are upon the earth, they have not progressed beyond the material stage of their existence and that the conditions of the school of the senses present natural educational opportunities, of which every